

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 5965

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: GT, BH, UK
SUBJ: BELIZE GOVERNOR'S VISIT TO GUATEMALA

1. SUMMARY: BELIZE GOVERNOR MCENTEE, ON FOUR-DAY VISIT HERE, EXPRESSED TO US GENERALLY PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF PROSPECTS OF ACCOMMODATION OF THE UK-Guatemalan POSTIONS ON BELIZE AND SKEPTICISM RE GOG DESIRE FOR TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE OF ANY SORT. HE RAISED SPECTRE OF A TOUGH PRO-INDEPENDENCE RESOLUTION AT UNGA LEADING TO IRRESISTIBLE PRESSURE ON HMG TO START INDEPENDENCE PROCESS AND FORM NUCLEUS OF AN EVENTUAL MULTI-NATIONAL SECURITY FORCE. MCENTEE BELIEVED BELIZEAN PREMIER PRICE WOULD ACCEPT SETTLEMENT INVOLVING TERRITORIAL TRANSACTION, ALTHOUGH EVEN MOHO LINE WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR HIM. END SUMMARY

2. ACCOMPANIED BY UK CONSUL MCQUILLAN, GOVERNOR OF BELIZE PETER MCENTEE CALLED ON CHARGE SEP 21. MCENTEE ARRIVED GUATEMALA CITY SEP 20 FOR LOW-PROFILE VISIT WITH FULL KNOWLEDGE AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF GOG. HE HAD ALREADY VISITED FOREIGN MINISTRY AND MCQUILLAN WILL
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HOST BUFFET-RECEPTION SEP 22 WITH SELECTED CONGRESSMEN AND MEDIA PEOPLE. OFFICIALLY, MCENTEE IS HERE AS A TOURIST.

3. MCENTEE DESCRIBED HIS RECEPTION AT FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT MORNING BY NUMBER-THREE MAN, LUIS AYCINENA, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND TREATY AFFAIRS, AS DISCOURAGING. HE FOUND

AYCINENA A HARD-LINER. MCENTEE SAID HE TOOK PAINS TO IMPRESS AYCINENA WITH THE DIFFICULTY HMG HAS IN RESISTING PRESSURES FROM BELIZE AND THE COMMONWEALTH TO GRANT INDEPENDENCE. HE HAD OUTLINED TO AYCINENA A "WORST CASE" SCENARIO WHICH HE NEVERTHELESS FELT WAS WELL WITHIN REALM OF POSSIBILITY. THAT WOULD TAKE FORM OF A TOUGH PRO-INDEPENDENCE RESOLUTION AT UNGA UNDER PRESSURE OF COMMONWEALTH. UK WOULD, AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RESIST SUCH A RESOLUTION IN ISOLATION. PRICE, IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, WOULD TRY TO WIN COMMITMENT FOR A MINIMUM THREE-YEAR POST-INDEPENDENCE SECURITY BLANKET, COMPRISED, AT MINIMUM, OF COMPANY-SIZED CONTINGENTS FROM A VARIETY OF COUNTRIES. THESE, HE SPECULATED, MIGHT BE CANADA, INDIA, PANAMA, GUYANA AND SOME OF THE CARIBBEANS. THE UK WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE ABLE TO DIVORCE ITSELF FROM SUCH A FORCE IF CALLED UPON. UNGA RESOLUTION ITSELF MIGHT CALL FOR SOME SUCH FORM OF SECURITY GUARANTEE.

4. MCENTEE MENTIONED THAT AYCINENA AND DIRECTOR OF BELIZEAN AFFAIRS MANUEL EDUARDO RODRIGUEZ WERE APPARENTLY SURPRISED TO LEARN FROM HIM THAT A GUATEMALAN ADVANCE TEAM HAS BEEN IN LONDON FOR BELIZE DISCUSSIONS. MCENTEE HAD HEARD NOTHING OF RESULTS OF THESE TALKS BUT TOOK SOME ENCOURAGEMENT FROM FACT THAT THEY HAD BEEN EXTENDED BY A COUPLE OF DAYS AND HAD NOT

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YET ENDED WHEN HE LEFT BELIZE ON 20TH.

5. NEITHER MCENTEE NOR MCQUILLAN BELIEVED RODRIGUEZ' RECENT TOUR OF BELIZE WOULD HAVE ANY POSITIVE EFFECT, EVEN THOUGH RODRIGUEZ DID CONCEDE IN SUBSEQUENT PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH MCQUILLAN THAT NO BELIZEAN HE HAD TALKED TO FAVORED INCORPORATION INTO GUATEMALA.

6. CHARGE ASKED MCENTEE WHERE PRICE STOOD ON THE QUESTION OF TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE. THE GOVERNOR SAID HE HAD NEVER RAISED THE QUESTION DIRECTLY WITH PRICE, BUT DESPITE PRICE'S PUBLIC INSISTENCE THAT HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT SURRENDER OF ANY TERRITORY, HE BELIEVED PRICE WOULD ACCEPT A TERRITORIAL CONCESSION TO GUATEMALA IF NECESSARY TO ASSURE A DURABLE PEACE ON THE BORDER. MCENTEE BELIEVED THE MONKEY RIVER LINE TO BE TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE AND THAT EVEN THE MOHO LINE WOULD PROVE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO SELL IN BELIZE. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, DISMISS OUT-OF-HAND THE POLITICAL FEASIBILITY OF A COMPROMISE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE MONKEY AND THE MOHO. WHAT PRICE COULD NOT LIVE WITH WOULD BE A HAGGLING PROCESS VISIBLE TO THE BELIZEAN PUBLIC.

7. MCENTEE ASKED OUR OPINION ABOUT THE SINCERITY EVEN OF THE MONKEY RIVER PROPOSAL PUT FORWARD BY THE GUATEMALANS. HE EVINced SKEPTICISM THAT THE GUATEMALANS WANTED ANY SOLUTION INVOLVING A TERRITORIAL TRANSACTION, AND POSITED A GOG PREFERENCE FOR CONTINUED DRIFT ON THE ISSUE, SINCE THIS SPARED THE OUTGOING LAUGERUD ADMINISTRATION THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL RISK INHERENT IN ANY TERRITORIAL ARRANGEMENT.

8. CHARGE REPLIED THAT WE BELIEVED PRESIDENT LAUGERUD AND FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA WERE DISCUSSING FORMULAS FOR TERRITORIAL ACCOMMODATION IN GOOD FAITH ALTHOUGH THIER ATTITUDE WOULD NECESSARILY BE INFLUENCED BY WHAT THEY CONFIDENTIAL

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JUDGED COULD BE SOLD TO THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY AND PUBLIC. IN RESPONSE TO MCENTEE'S QUESTIONING, CHARGE REITERATED U.S. ASSESSMENT THAT GOG WOULD INDEED RESORT TO SOME FORM OF MILITARY ACTION AGAINST BELIZE IF FACED WITH UNILATERAL UK ACTION TOWARDS BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE.

9. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION MCENTEE VENTURED THAT IF PRICE'S PARTY WINS THE 1978 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS HE WILL BE UNDER LESS COMPULSION TO PRESS FOR EARLY INDEPENDENCE. ANDREWS

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